

So You Want to Start a Blog

By: Beth Jones

Blogging is no longer a new concept, but I'm still asked on a regular basis to give advice to new bloggers. Enquirers want to know about blog platforms, design and templates, how to increase traffic and the list goes on and on. Since this is such a hot topic and blogs have increasingly played a big part in the fashion industry, I thought I'd share my tips and advice.

Blog Platforms: Wordpress, Blogspot, and Tumblr

First things first, you must choose your blog's platform and the three main options are [Wordpress](#), [Blogspot](#) and [Tumblr](#). Personally, I've used all three and from my experience I think Wordpress is the best for a traditional blog. Wordpress allows the user to manipulate their content and photos easily, and also offers a lot of add-ons to customize the blog.

Tumblr is another option that is having huge success, and functions as a blog with a social platform. Readers can log on to Tumblr and begin to follow anyone they choose, they will then receive a stream of content from everyone they follow. There is a lot of success associated with using Tumblr because followers can reblog the content and that helps viral growth.

Wordpress is the best choice for traditional, content-heavy blogs and Tumblr is the best choice for curated images and fast-sharing blogs. Most of the heavy-hitting bloggers have a traditional platform, but utilize a Tumblr to expand on content with inspiration, behind-the-scene images and quotes. It never hurts to cover all the platforms in the blogging world.

Blog Design and Template

Now that you have chosen your platform, you are ready to start your blog and the first thing to think about is the design and template. Before you begin think, SIMPLE! Don't go overboard with design because you want your content to be the main attraction.

I suggest using a white or muted background and keeping your font and colors basic. Flip through magazines and notice that the background is always white, the font is simple and the images are what pop off the page. Your blog should be the same, and you can choose a template from Wordpress or Tumblr that has this aesthetic.

The layout of your blog can get a little more personal and show off who you are. You might be choosing from a pre-designed free template or having

someone design it, but either way you will decide on Columns, Post Width, Pages, and a Banner.

Every blog should have at least one sidebar column where you can put information such as links, contact info, categories, etc. One column is sufficient and there is no need for two unless that is part of your personal design.

Post Width is the space that you use for your photos and content, and I personally set this very wide so that my photos stand out and are eye-catching to the reader.

Pages can be added depending on your chosen template, but these are great for adding separate sections for contact info, bio, FAQ'S, etc. If you are a first time blogger, I suggest working hard on developing your main page and then eventually adding pages if you feel that your readers would benefit from them.

The Banner is all about you and the place that you can play and create something that says, "This is me and this is my fabulous blog". You can create your banner in PowerPoint, Publisher, Photoshop, or any program that lets you arrange photos and text. Then you can save as a jpg file or screen grab the image (Mac computers: Shift+Command+4) and upload it to your blog.

Content

Content is key! If you want to have a successful blog, you must develop clear content that reflects who you are and is true to you. There should be a consistent voice running throughout your blog that readers can relate and attach themselves to.

You should update your blog often. Readers will visit more if they know there will be new content waiting for them when they log on. You want them to keep coming back.

Spreading the Word

You've now designed your blog and you are up and running, you have created great content and you are proud of your work, but how do you get readers?

Start by diving into multiple social media platforms like [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pose](#), [Tumblr](#), [Pinterest](#) etc. Engage people on these platforms and begin to develop relationships. These relationships will help to spread the word. If you are creating a personal style blog, become part of the personal style social media sites such as [Lookbook.nu](#), [Chictopia](#), and [Stylecaster](#). These sites allow you to upload your photo and provide your link.

Network, network, network! This doesn't mean that you have to network in person, you can do this online. Email bloggers that you admire and ask to swap links, leave comments on blogs and forums that are relevant to your blog, start conversations on Twitter and Facebook. Email companies and brands when you wear or talk about their products, and they may share and post on their social media platforms. If you have the opportunity to attend an event that is for bloggers, go! When you meet people ask if they have a Twitter or Facebook and message and tag them, these people will share and respond and your traffic will increase.

This information will get you off and running, but keep alert because this world is moving fast and you have to keep up to be part of the race.

Links:

<http://wordpress.com/>

<http://www.tumblr.com/dashboard>

<http://www.chictopia.com/>

<http://lookbook.nu/>

<http://www.stylecaster.com/>